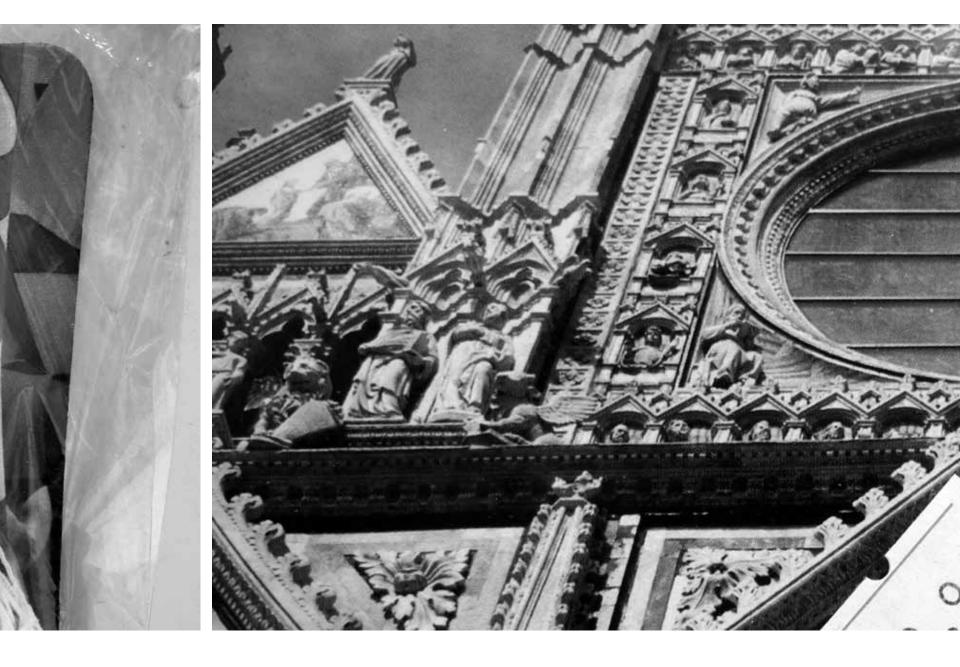


I was happy then

















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I was happy then.



The Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni made L'eclisse in 1962. The film begins at dawn on a summer morning inside a modernist apartment located on the suburban fringes of Rome. In the opening scene a beautiful young literary translator named Vittoria ends a relationship with her writer lover, Riccardo. Riccardo's final plea: he only wanted to make her happy.

Vittoria listlessly responds, "When we first met, I was 20 years old. I was happy then." She subsequently emerges alone from his home into a barren, interstitial landscape. For the remainder of the film Vittoria is a tourist figure traversing the urban, architectural and economic landscapes of Rome, including the pursuit of a new romance with a handsome,

energetic stockbroker named Piero. Vittoria and Piero are unable to fully connect with one another, and that discontinuity is mirrored in the juxtapositions of urban development on the outskirts of Rome with the historic weight of its center. Vittoria's journey becomes a reclamation of the past in negotiation with the material and ephemeral qualities of contemporary life.

I was happy then is both a book and film by Bureau for Open Culture that unites the filmic spaces of L'eclisse and the presentday reality of Siena, Italy, an early Renaissance city beholden to a continual performance of its deeply influential history. Through the framework of a tourist guide that focuses on the topics of alienation,

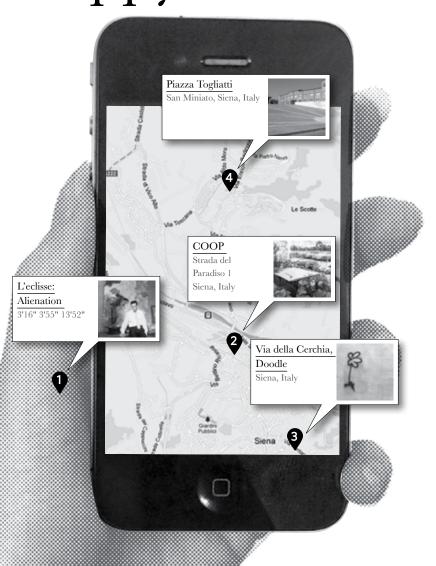
architecture, economy, love and urbanization, this work drawn from research and lived experience is a means to explore postwar and contemporary life in Siena. It diverts attention away from the usual historic center toward a suburban periphery beyond the city walls where architectural and urban-planning initiatives other than medieval brick and mortar exist.

I was happy then functions as a critical reflection on the governing forces of capital and tourism, which encourage cities to renounce the contemporary in exchange for a re-presentation and recycling of key historical moments to satisfy the desires of tourists.

As a work of printed matter and film, *I was* happy then extends

the possibilities for dissemination of written and visual material into the public sphere. It draws on the potential of extracting and uniting the complementary qualities of book and film into a singular work.

I wanted to make you happy.



To be cut off from something that has been familiar. Getting lost in a different culture. Being in a group with which you have nothing in common. Fake freedom. Alienation is something generated by difference. Feeling isolation even without being alone. Alienated by all religions. Nostalgia for meaningful connections that existed in the past.



Alienat





L'eclisse: Alienation

3'16" 3'55" 13'52"

Vittoria stands inside the finely appointed interior of a modern apartment. The architecture is juxtaposed with antique leather chairs, stacks of manuscripts,

marble busts and old lamps. A few contemporary abstract paintings and sculptures populate the otherwise conservative space. Vittoria is with Riccardo. It is his home. These are his things. This is his world. She is statuesque among the many treasures. The sound of her heels on the polished stone floor and the gentle whir of an electric fan are the only interruptions of a tense silence. Riccardo is the future ex-lover with whom she spent dusk to dawn talking about the end of their affair. He gazes at Vittoria as she walks across the floor. He gazes at the curves of her legs as



they become part of a forest of legs belonging to the tables and chairs—all to which Riccardo lays claim.

Riccardo desperately stops Vittoria before she leaves, "Be good and tell me one last thing. Don't you love me anymore? Or you just don't want to marry me?" Vittoria's response is bored exasperation. Riccardo informs her, yet again, "I wanted to make you happy." But Vittoria leaves the house, walking out into a puzzling terrain, a landscape in transition from the Italian pastoral to a new suburbia with rows of streetlights and large

apartment blocks. A water tower shaped like an atomic mushroom cloud looms overhead.



COOP

Strada del Paradiso 1 Siena, Italy

COOP is the largest supermarket chain in Italy. Founded in 1967, it is part of a legacy of Italian consumer cooperatives that dates to the 1890s.



At each of its branches COOP members elect councils who in turn appoint a board of directors. Italian law requires cooperatives to set aside three percent of net profits to fund future cooperative development. In Siena, COOP has an outstanding selection of plastic flowers and an automated Motorola "Salvatempo," a digital system that ensures customers make transactions without interacting in person with a COOP employee.



Via della Cerchia, Doodle Siena, Italy

"Where are you going?" Piero asks. Vittoria met him at the stock exchange the day before. He is her mother's broker. "Where else? To see my mother. She's not the type to draw flowers." In an afternoon of chaos following a crash of the markets in Italy, Vittoria follows a trader who "lost 50 million lire," says Piero. The trader walks into







a pharmacy; he buys a tranquilizer. At a nearby café, he sketches representations of little flowers on a napkin. The voyeur Vittoria waits until he finishes and leaves the café. She takes the napkin, contemplates the quizzical

contemplates the quizzical simplicity in response to losing a vast fortune. "He drew flowers," she tells Piero, showing the doodle to him. Piero disregards it.



Piazza Togliatti

San Miniato, Siena, Italy

Situated in the shadow of a housing complex built in the early 1990s, Piazza Togliatti is the center of shopping in San Miniato, a suburb four miles north of Siena. Its semicircular shape has a design of alternating red bricks and gray concrete strips. The pattern is a simulacrum of the famed Piazza del Campo in the center of Siena. Missing from





this representation in the campo in San Miniato is the finely crafted herringbone pattern of bricks and strips of white stone that divide the piazza in Siena into nine sections. That design pays tribute to the Council of the Nine, magistrates that governed Siena during an era of extraordinary innovation and creativity in the early 14th century.





No, we won't call. Take care.



Things built, created for artistic purposes as well as inhabiting. Architecture is the shape of space. Should be a beautiful idea and not only function. Should function and not only be a beautiful idea. Structures designed and built.



Architect



Parking Il Campo

Strada dei Tufi Siena, Italy

Parking II Campo was built in 1994. It is one of four large parking garages inside the walled center of Siena that accommodates automobiles without special permits, which are required for driving in the city. Built inconspicuously into a steep hillside and operated by Siena Parcheggi S.p.A., Parking II Campo's 560 spaces are 15 minutes by foot to the Piazza del Campo. Every day during high tourist season, the garage is filled to capacity.

In 2004 the Perugian artist Sauro Cardinali made the site-specific work *Between Sunrise and Night*. The work is an oculus 20 feet in diameter bored deep into Parking II Campo. The opening is located in a garden park on top of the garage. It frames two perspectives. Dependent on the





point of view, one can look several stories into the depths of the garage or standing inside look up to the sky. A total of 4,200 small rectangular greenish-black and white tiles line the circular wall. The colors and alternating stripes recall the exterior and interior of Siena's Duomo.



L'eclisse: Architecture

7'16" 16'46" 18'49"

Vittoria opens the curtain of a picture window in Riccardo's apartment, allowing the morning light to enter. The mushroom-shaped water tower of the EUR is unmistakably in the background. It is a scene perfectly framed by the window. The futuristic design of the tower is juxtaposed with the deteriorating remains of an old woodshed in





the middle ground, while classic Italian umbrella pines populate this changing landscape. The figure of Vittoria emerges into this landscape when she leaves Riccardo's apartment for the last time. Dressed in a sleek and simple black dress, she marches forward across the surface with its concrete expanses marked by grids of streetlights. Dirt and stones have been pushed into piles to make room for the new. Riccardo drives after Vittoria in his shiny sedan. "Forgive me for not offering to come with you," he says.

"Have we ever gone out in the morning this

early?" asks Riccardo after catching up with Vittoria. Large housing blocks of the EUR populate a distant space behind the canopy of pines. Their final separation takes place after entering the gate to her apartment complex. Located at Viale dell'Umanesimo 307, or Avenue of Humanism, this is the home of Vittoria who experiences the world with curiosity and patience. "I'm sorry," says Vittoria. Riccardo begins another plea and suddenly acquiesces: "No, we won't call. Take care." And he leaves.





Nante Sures logne



Situationist Theses on Traffic Guy Debord, 1959

#1: A mistake made by all the city planners is to consider the private automobile (and its byproducts, such as the motorcycle) as essentially a means of transportation. In reality, it is the most notable material symbol of the notion of happiness that developed capitalism tends to spread throughout the society. The automobile is

at the heart of this general propaganda, both as supreme good of an alienated life and as essential product of the capitalist market: It is generally being said this year that American economic prosperity is soon going to depend on the success of the slogan "Two cars per family."

#9: Revolutionary urbanists will not limit their concern to the circulation of things, or to the circulation of human beings trapped in a world of things. They will try to break these topological chains, paving the way with their experiments for a human journey through authentic life.





4

Fontebranda Escalators

Porta Fontebranda, Siena, Italy

With entrances at Via di Vallepiatta and Via di Fontebranda, six flights of mechanized escalators have a capacity to move 4,500 people hourly up and down 115 fifteen feet—12 stories. The escalators connect a deep and difficult-to-access valley with the more famous historic district of the Duomo. Managed by an office

located in the valley, the escalators are accessible 24 hours and automatically function when embedded photocells detect motion. Although

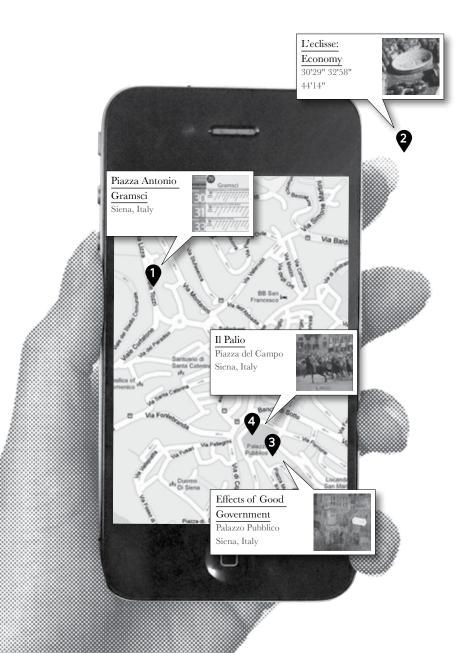


originally conceived in the 1980s when Parking St. Catherine was built outside the wall through Porta Fontebranda, the escalators were not realized until 2005.





Look like her?



Theory of greed versus life, humanity. Absurdity of eternal growth. Commerce and finance: business, work and trade. Perpetuating cycle, both local and global. A country's financial state. Or a city's state. The current that decides what is and isn't affordable for the well-being of a city or country. Economy is powerful.



Econo





Piazza Antonio Gramsci Siena, Italy

The Italian writer Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was one of the most brilliant Marxist theorists of the 20th century. A leader of the Communist Party in Italy, Gramsci voiced his critique of capitalist society through a concept called "cultural hegemony." Cultural hegemony, he claimed, is the way in which economic interests of a bourgeois class are validated by perpetuating societal activities and belief systems via folklore, popular culture and religion.

Piazza Gramsci is the public transportation hub of Siena. Only 75 minutes by bus from Florence, Gramsci is a busy center of local buses and large tourist coaches operated by Toscana Mobilità "Tiemme." Tiemme manages four main





transportation companies that circulate riders through the Tuscan provinces of Livorno, Grosseto,

Siena and Arezzo. It has a fleet of more than 750 buses and transports almost 40 million passengers annually, many of them day-trippers. Round trip between Florence and Siena costs 15 euros.







L'eclisse: Economy

30'29" 32'58" 44'14"

Vittoria is a traveler and a voyeur. She is a tourist of surfaces and spaces, explorer of representations of objects and places of both proximity and distance. At the end of her difficult day, she is inside a neighbor's apartment with her friend Anita. "This is Marta," Anita says. Marta is from Kenya. Her apartment is filled with



posters, music and treasures gleaned from this homeland. "Nice bed—so low and big" Vittoria observes. "What lake is that?" she asks. "It's near Nairobi. It's called Naivasha." Vittoria is suddenly swept into the embodiment—her dress, movement and voice—of what she interprets to be a Kenyan woman. "Look like her?" Anita asks. This trip is achieved through experiences of representations in Vittoria's immediate space and time. "Identical!" she says.



Effects of Good Government

Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, Italy

A series of frescoes painted by the celebrated Sienese artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1290–1348) adorn the walls of a government hall in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Since art of the early Renaissance is usually dedicated to religious subject matters, Lorenzetti's murals, painted from 1337 to 1339, are unique because







they document secular activity and political ideals of that period. The paintings cover the walls of a room where the Sienese Council of the Nine once convened. Made up of nine chief magistrates, the Council ruled from 1292 to 1355 during Siena's greatest era of cultural and economic prosperity. The frescoes of cityscape and countryside show Sienese citizens enjoying "peace and harmony" as the "effects of good government."

On the east wall, Lorenzetti's painting *Effects* of Good Government in the City and in the Country

shows early 14th century citizens engaged in diverse economic activities. The murals were a kind of manifesto for the Council of the Nine, depicting results of their government regulation that oversaw institutions of private property, markets and investments. Today, Siena's economic model is dedicated almost exclusively to the performance and representation of early Renaissance life when Lorenzetti praised the virtues of diversity.





4 Il Pal

<u>Il Palio</u>

Piazza del Campo, Siena, Italy

A horse race called the "Palio di Siena" is held in the Piazza del Campo every year on July 2 and August 16, corresponding respectively to the Feast of the Visitation and the Feast of the Assumption. Originating in the 13th century, the race is a competition among the individual *contrada*, or neighborhood districts, of Siena. At that time, the

racecourse was the entire city. Today, the Palio is confined to the Piazza del Campo and draws an overwhelming number of visitors, generating an extraordinary economy. A parade of medieval costumes of the contrada is performed before each race. Colorful coats of arms of the 17 contrada are found on posters, flags and other memorabilia sold throughout the city.





I'm the call girl.



To be obsessed. Not to know how to stop. Extended through the movement of my every single action. Love is that word. A reason to smile. Or a reason to cry. A complicated circle of giving and receiving.









<u>L'eclisse: Love</u> 83'14" 91'42" 101'44"

Esposizione Universale Roma (EUR) is a business and residential district on the southern outskirts of Rome. Originally envisioned as a site of the 1942 World's Fair, where Benito Mussolini intended to commemorate 20 years of Fascism, the fair was canceled and the EUR severely damaged during World War II. In the 1950s and '60s construction of the Fascistera buildings continued, and the district was almost finished by the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Antonioni sets his film in this urban space that is neither the entirety of its original vision nor that of subsequent generations of urban designers.

The white stripes of a pedestrian crosswalk in the EUR define the distance that Piero and Vittoria will travel before, as Piero informs her,



"When we get there, I'm going to kiss you."

This nondescript intersection in a nondescript neighborhood becomes charged with the mark of their nascent love. Here, in the middle of the crosswalk, Vittoria anticipates the moment:

"We're halfway." Later, the wind begins to rustle and the stripes of this crosswalk

signal another interruption of another vision in another age—a connection that never materializes.



Telecom Italia

Siena, Italy

Located throughout Siena are publicly accessible, street-level spaces with

telephones. Telecom Italia provides these clean, well-lighted rooms with working

payphones. The spaces





are open 24 hours a day. Yet, they are dioramas, void of practical function and empty except for the occasional pedestrian without an umbrella seeking refuge from the rain. Since landlines are no longer the predominant technology that connects individuals in Italy and the world, Telecom Italia also operates TIM. TIM is a cellular phone and Internet service with shops throughout the city. These spaces are packed with subscribers and users who add money to SIM cards in order to "connect and share with people in your life," says Facebook.

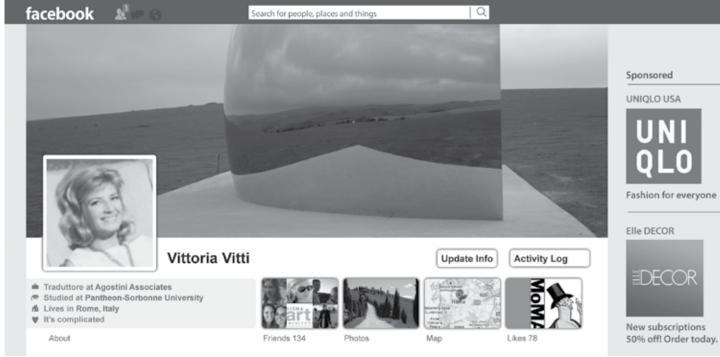


Facebook: Vittoria

facebook.com/vittoria.vitti.75

The complex character Vittoria is understood by carefully observing the extraordinary attention she gives to everyday objects, surfaces, sound, and experiences. She pauses unexpectedly, for example, to watch leaves blow, feel the wind on her face and caress the smooth rim of a vase. In the accumulation of these subtleties, the personal





qualities of Vittoria emerge. The visual cues are important. But the absence of information—both visual and factual—is equally critical for understanding who are Vittoria and her lover, Piero.



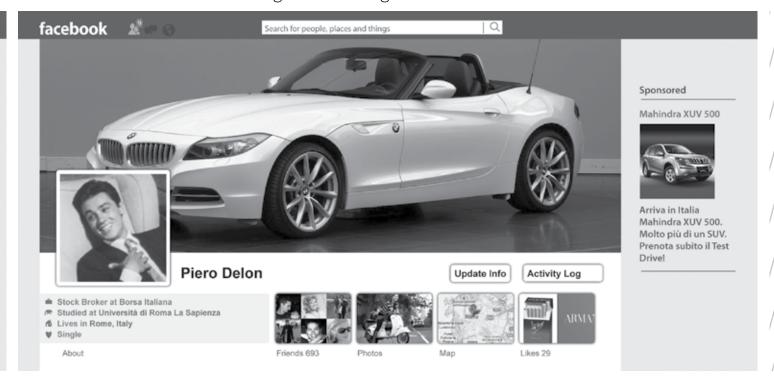
Facebook: Piero

facebook.com/piero.delon.5

The characters Vittoria and Piero develop through a delicate balance of withholding and revealing

information. To that end, Facebook is a framework that constructs contemporary identities.

Combining the filmic names Vittoria and Piero with the real names of the actors Monica Vitti and Alain Delon, Vittoria Vitti and Piero Delon step out of the filmic space and become part of the present digital moment that is simultaneously fact and fiction. Users on Facebook deploy tactics—not unlike Antonioni—that show and hide data in order to build personal identities for the public.



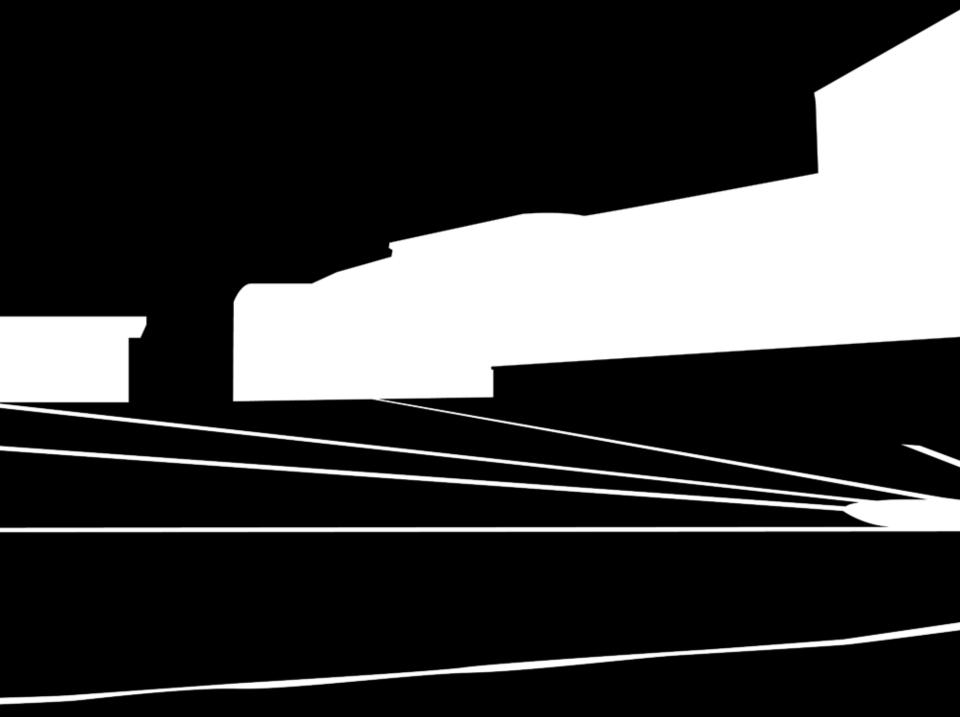




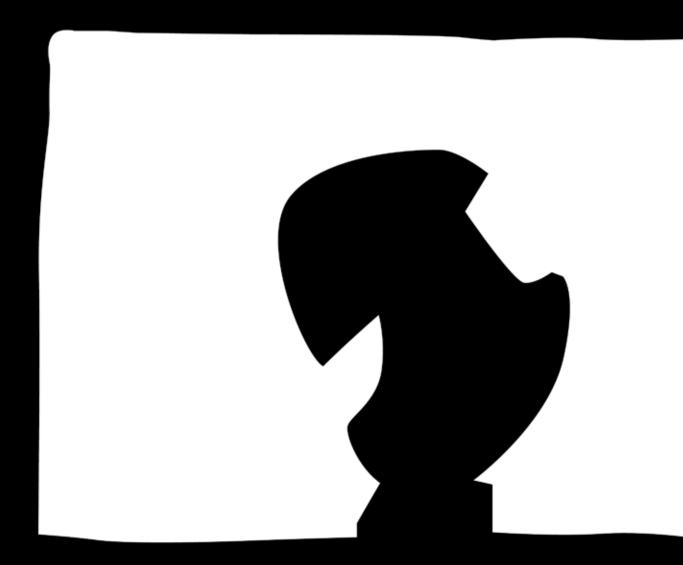
Yes. Let's decide. I've already decided.



I'm leaving Riccardo. Are you going sor



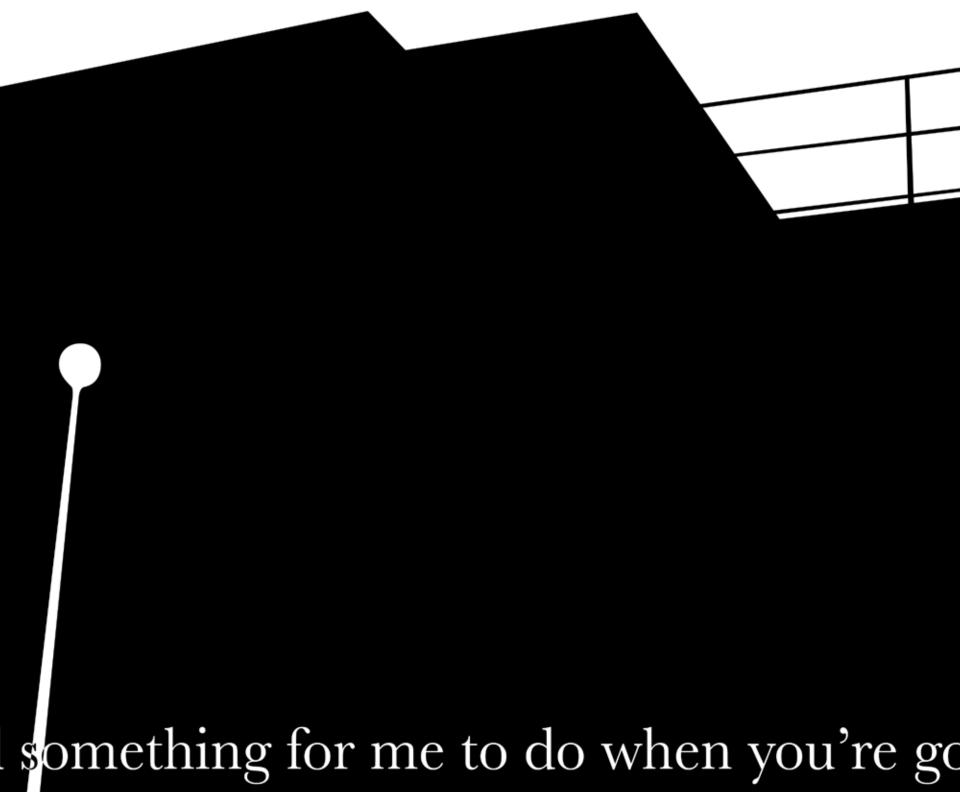
neplace? It's the last time. No, Riccardo

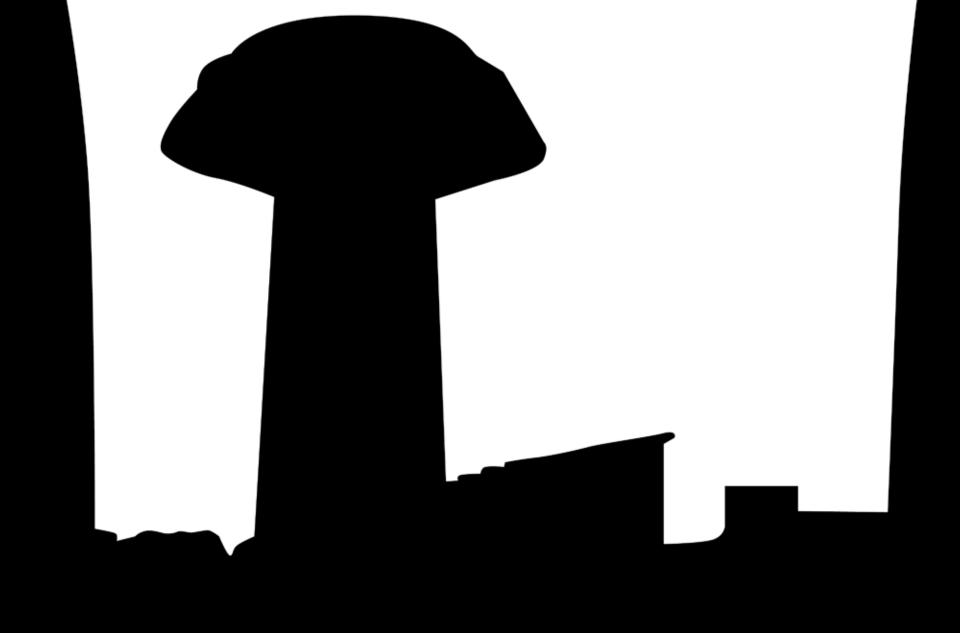


. Please don't. What do you want me to

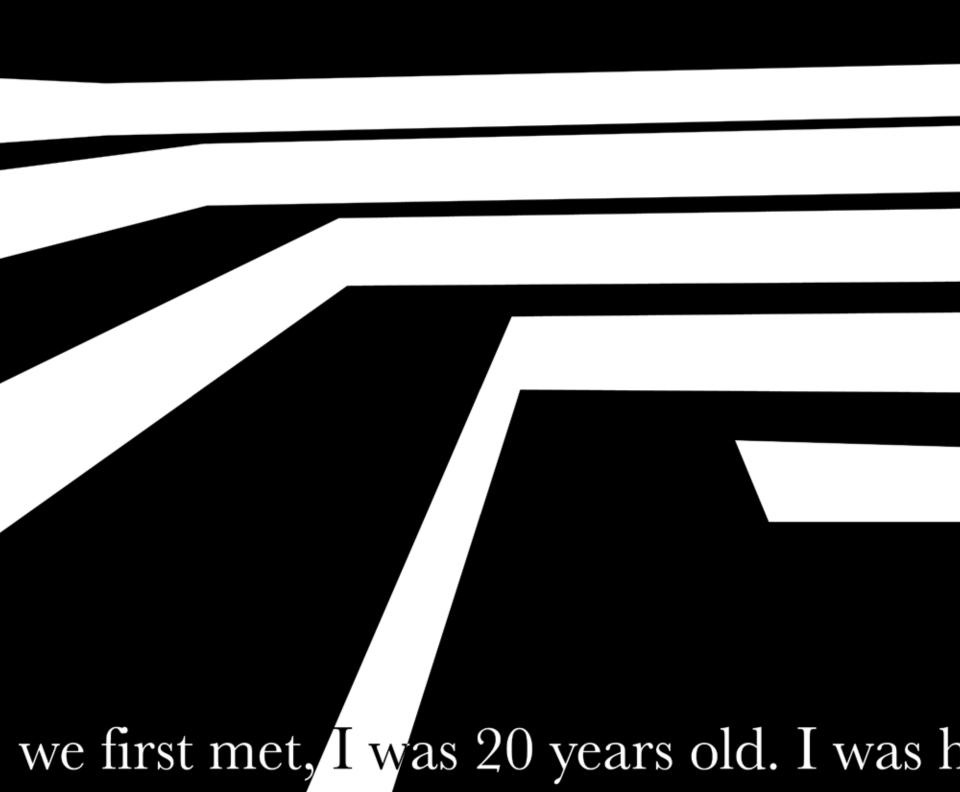


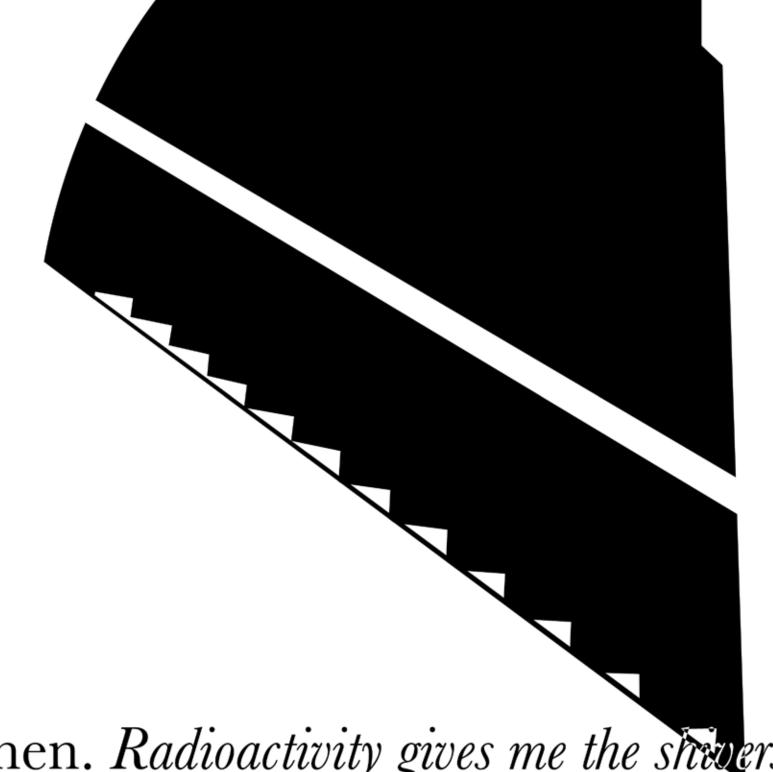






one. I wanted to make you happy. When

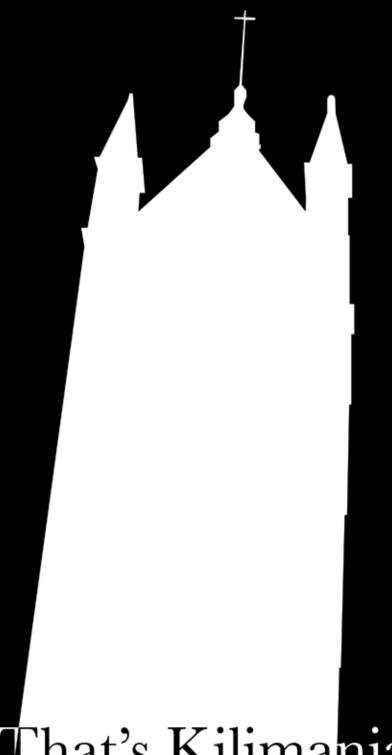




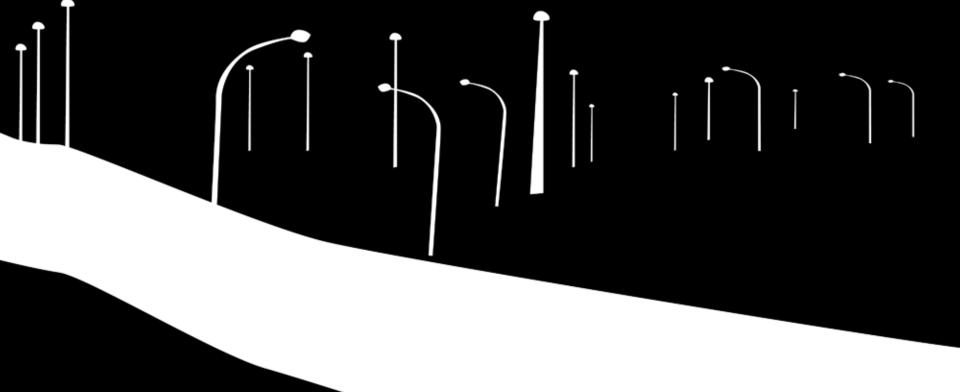
appy then. Radioactivity gives me the shivers



but you, but you, give me them more, even more

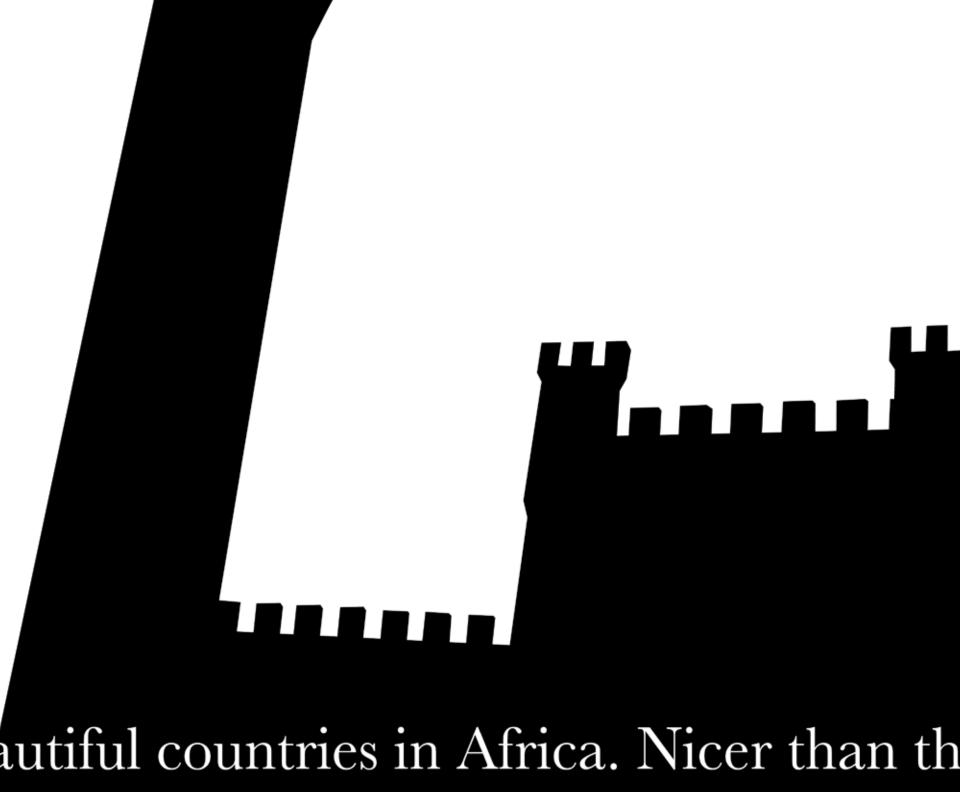


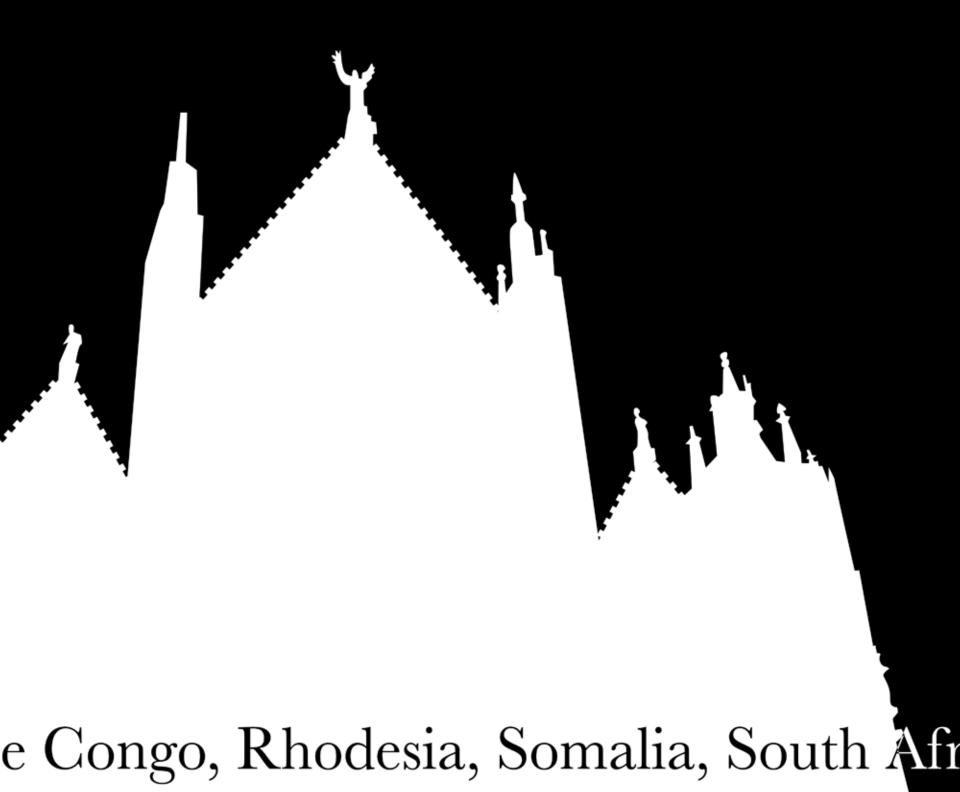
e. That's Kilima<mark>njaro. Well, well. The sr</mark>



nows of Kilimanjaro. These are the Zan









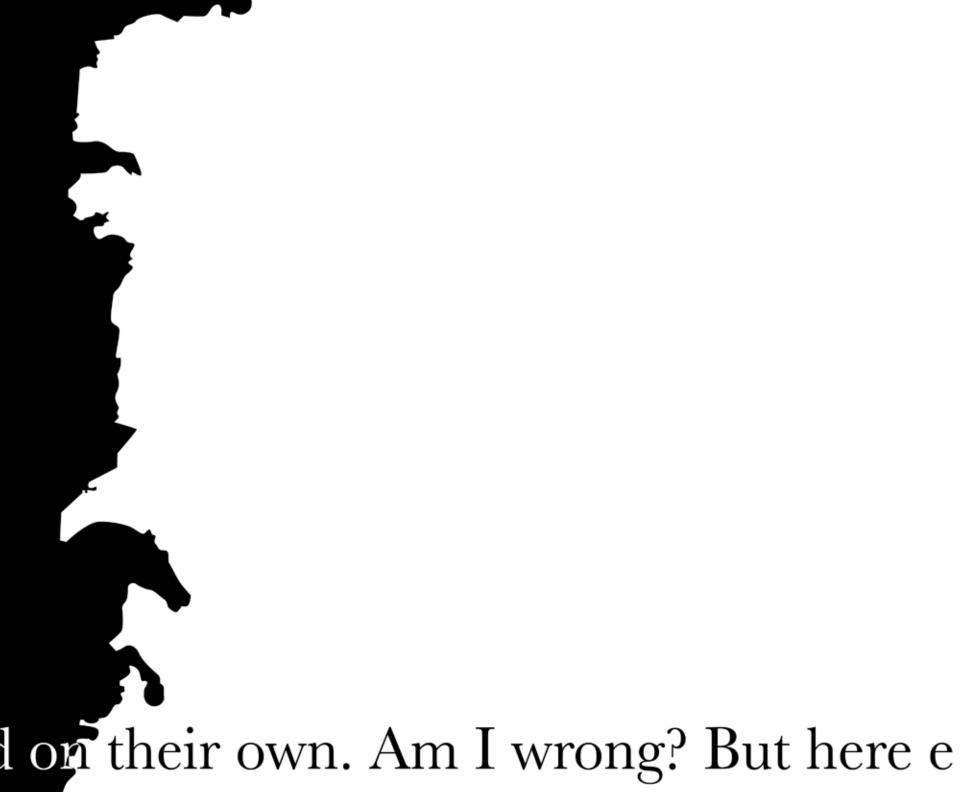


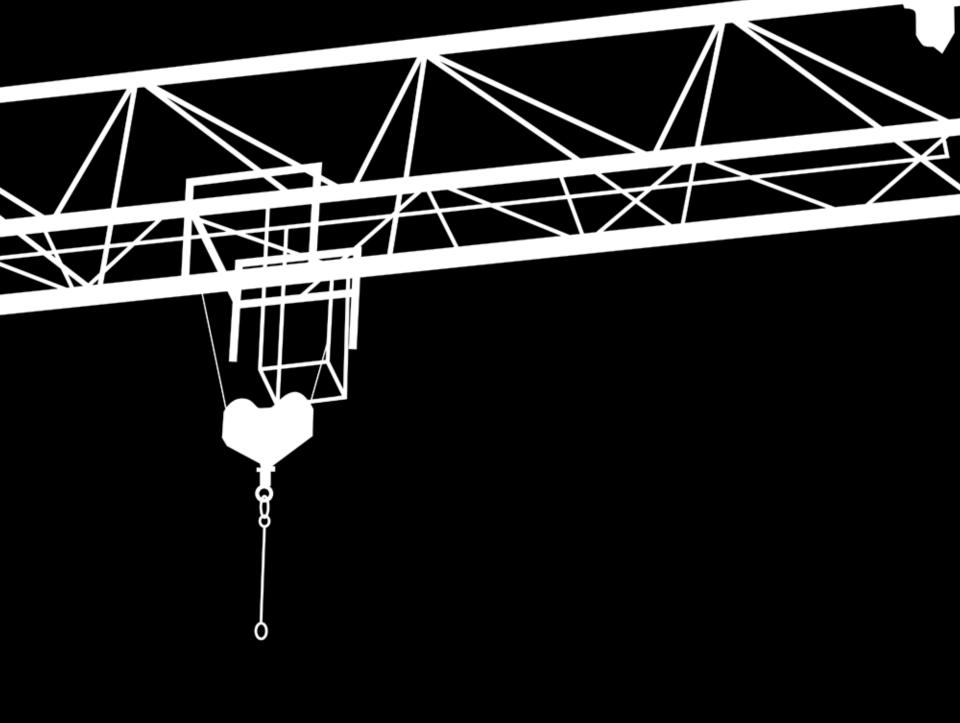
This is a baobab tree. I gave flowers to the d











verything's so difficult. Even love.

I thought I'd be here early.



Setting boundaries. Disturbing public space. Moving from a rural to city environment. Urbanization is the process in which the number of people living in cities increases compared with the number of people living in rural areas. Growth of urban spaces over natural spaces. Living in an area that is made by humanity. Breaking away from the traditional. Making modern.



Urbaniza



<u>L'eclisse:</u> <u>Urbanization</u>

120'45" 124'55" 125'16"

Vittoria stands on a corner of that intersection. It is the place where Piero said with certainty he was going to kiss her. It is their

place, the meeting point. She waits. She notices the piece of wood that was so casually tossed into a barrel of water the day before. "I thought I'd be here early," Piero says, as he appears, walking across the street. "But I got here first," she tells him.

Vittoria flicks—yet again—the wood floating on the surface of the water as if needing to touch something, anything of the material world to confirm she remains part of it. They agree to go to Piero's place but not without hesitation. She pauses in that intersection. She shows without



apology the admiration for another "great face"—that of a young man who walks by.

Another agreement for another day: to meet at the same corner. Yet, we are left uncertain of the fate of Vittoria and Piero, and the time of their rendezvous comes and goes. They are not there. The sun sets, and the streetlights flicker and the workers arrive home to modern apartments in a modern suburb.





San Miniato Housing Complex Siena, Italy

San Miniato is a suburban neighborhood located four miles north of the center of Siena. It has a residential complex with six housing blocks designed by the Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo (1919–2005). De Carlo's visionary approach to architecture sought to embrace public opinion in the urban-planning



process, using what he called "architecture of participation."

In 1990 de Carlo used both the
Brutalist style of architecture
of exposed, raw concrete and
a participatory approach
for planning this housing
complex in San Miniato. The
original plans included a series
of four housing blocks with
three expansive common
spaces between each

building. The plan also called for a woods and a lake that would be fed by a natural spring. The emphasis on nature would complement the lack of green space and the high concentration of stone and brick surfaces in central Siena. None of that happened.

In the end, only the housing complex was realized. And de Carlo had to compromise the common green spaces for it; he was required to design two additional buildings in their place in order to satisfy density requirements determined by the building committee of Siena.









Palazzo di Giustizia

Via Rinaldo Franci 26, Siena, Italy

Built in 1984, the Palazzo di Giustizia—or Courthouse—is distinctive among other buildings inside the walls of historic Siena. It is designed by the architect Pierluigi Spadolini (1922–2000) and stands across from the Piazza Antonio Gramsci. The building is made in the Brutalist technique of poured and reinforced concrete
combined with
a facade of
prefabricated,
convex concrete
panels. The
design of the
facade echoes

the slit-like windows of early Renaissance Sienese palaces.





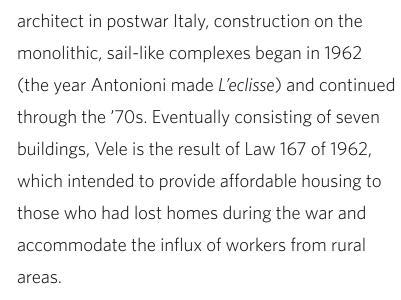


4

Le Vele di Scampia

Naples, Italy

Le Vele di Scampia, or
"Sails of Scampia", is a
series of urban housing
complexes in a modern
northern suburb of
Naples. Conceived by Francesco
Di Salvo (1913–1977), a prominent



While the suburb in which Vittoria lives is frozen in filmic time, conditions at Le Vele reveal the real-time effects of modernist ideological





visions for large urban housing complexes. Never provided with adequate social and economic resources to accommodate the more than 160 families inhabiting each building, today Le Vele is a center of social unrest and drug trafficking and a symbol of the failure of Italian socialism.







L'ECLISSE redux

L'ECLISSE redux is an exhibition by Bureau for Open Culture that utilizes Michelangelo Antonioni's 1962 film *L'eclisse* as a means through which to explore postwar urban development and contemporary life in Siena, Italy. It is the result of a project fellowship awarded to James

Voorhies and Bureau for Open Culture by the Siena Art Institute. As part of the fellowship, Bureau for Open Culture is charged with engaging students, which transpires through



a series of public seminars that take place over the course of six weeks.

To that end, Bureau for Open Culture operates

temporarily out of the former space of a street-level gallery at Via del Poggio 2 in the center of Siena. The space is simultaneously a studio, exhibition and learning







site where 24 film stills from *L'eclisse* are selected, printed and installed. The stills are framework and guide for discussing broad topics such as alienation, architecture, economy,

love and urbanization as related to Siena. Antonioni's filmmaking techniques, character development and narrative structures are analyzed within this





context. The film is an object—a spine—along which visual responses in photography, collage, writing, video, painting, drawing and performance accrue during the

exhibition. The seminars are free and open to the public with readings available in advance.

L'ECLISSE redux is a platform that inverts the typically private activities





of an academy into a mode of public performance, exposing and making available for free the often costly production of knowledge inside higher education

institutions.

With L'ECLISSE redux,
Bureau for Open Culture
inhabits the exhibition
form and expectations
associated with it in order





to disrupt that form and pose a new situation with it. The work recaptures the original function of the public sphere that used objects as a primary means to produce

knowledge among a group of committed individuals. That object, in this case, is Michelangelo Antonioni's film *L'eclisse*, and the individuals are students and visiting public.





Thank you

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A very sincere appreciation to Miriam Grottanelli de Santi and Jane South for an invitation to reside in Siena and work with the Siena Art Institute.

BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

Bureau for Open Culture is an itinerant curatorial initiative that utilizes exhibition, education, design and publishing to inhabit the position of an art institution as an overall form of critical practice.

I was happy then and L'ECLISSE redux are produced by James Voorhies, Nate Padavick and Cassandra Troyan. The film component of I was happy then is viewable at www.bureauforopenculture.org.



James Voorhies is an American curator, art historian and writer.
He holds a PhD in modern and contemporary art history and is founder and director of Bureau

for Open Culture. His writing appears in publications for the contemporary arts including *Texte zur Kunst, frieze d/e*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Printed Matter, Inc., and numerous artist monographs. He teaches art history and critical theory at Bennington College in Vermont.



Nate Padavick is a designer and illustrator, responsible for the printed and digital design of Bureau for Open Culture. His work appears in newspapers, magazines and

on greeting cards, and he has published three illustrated cookbooks. He is a co-creator of the illustration websites and community platforms *They Draw & Cook* and *They Draw & Travel*, which promote and showcase thousands of illustrators worldwide.



Cassandra Troyan is a filmmaker, artist and writer. After graduating with a BA in art history from the Ohio State University, she completed an MFA at the University

of Chicago where she currently teaches. She is author of the books *THRONE OF BLOOD* and *The Things We Embody Are The Things We Destroy*. Her work is exhibited and screened internationally.

BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

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